BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

TERRELL C. BIRCH
RAYMOND C. STEWART
JOSEPH A. KOLASCH
JAMES M. SLATTERY
BERNARD L. SWEENEY*
MICHAEL K. MUTTER
CHARLES GORENSTEIN
GERALD M. MURPHY, JR.
LEONARD R. SVENSSON
TERRY L. CLARK
ANDREW D. MEIKLE
MARC S. WEINER
JOE McKINNEY MUNCY
ROBERT J. KENNEY
DONALD J. DALEY
JOHN W. BAILEY
JOHN A. CASTELLANO, III
GARY D. YACURA

OF COUNSEL:
HERBERT M. BIRCH (1905-1996)
ELLIOT A. GOLDBERG*
WILLIAM L. GATES*
EDWARD H. VALANCE
RUPERT J. BRADY (RET.)*
F. PRINCE BUTLER
FRED S. WHISENHUNT

*ADMITTED TO A BAR OTHER THAN VA.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

8110 GATEHOUSE ROAD
SUITE 500 EAST
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22042-1210
USA

(703) 205-8000

FAX: (703) 205-8050
(703) 698-8590 (G IV)

e-mail: mailroom@bskb.com
web: http://www.bskb.com

CALIFORNIA OFFICE
COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA

THOMAS S. AUCHTERLONIE
JAMES T. ELLER, JR.
SCOTT L. LOWE
MARK J. NUELL, PH.D.
D. RICHARD ANDERSON
PAUL C. LEWIS
MARK W. MILSTEAD*
JOHN CAMPA*
RICHARD J. GALLAGHER

REG. PATENT AGENTS:
FREDERICK R. HANDREN
MARYANNE ARMSTRONG, PH.D.
MAKI HATSUMI
MIKE S. RYU
CRAIG A. McROBBIE
GARTH M. DAHLEN, PH.D.
LAURA C. LUTZ
ROBERT E. GOOZNER, PH.D.
HYUNG N. SOHN
MATTHEW J. LATTIG
ALAN PEDERSEN-GILES
JUSTIN D. KARJALA
C. KEITH MONTGOMERY
TIMOTHY R. WYCKOFF
HERMES M. SOYEZ, PH.D.
KRISTI L. RUPERT, PH.D.

jc772 U.S. PTO
09/08/00

Date: <u>September 8, 2000</u>
Docket No.: <u>4175-0101P</u>

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box PATENT APPLICATION
Washington, D.C.   20231

Sir:

As authorized by the inventor(s), transmitted herewith for filing
is a patent application applied for on behalf of the inventor(s)
according to the provisions of 37 CFR 1.41(c).

Inventor(s):   BENEKE, Knut

For: A METHOD FOR ADJUSTING COLOR IN AN IMAGE

Enclosed are:

 X   A specification consisting of 12 pages

 X   1   sheet(s) of _____ drawings

 X   Certified copy of Priority Document(s)

 X   Executed Declaration in accordance with 37 CFR 1.64 will follow

 ___   A verified statement to establish small entity status under 37
       CFR 1.9 and 37 CFR 1.27

 ___   Preliminary Amendment

 X   Information Sheet

 X   Information Disclosure Statement, PTO-1449 with reference(s)

____ Other _____

The filing fee has been calculated as shown below:

LARGE ENTITY   SMALL ENTITY

FOR	NO. FILED	NO. EXTRA	RATE	FEE		RATE	FEE
BASIC FEE	*********** *********** ***********	********** ********** **********	***** ***** *****	$690.00	or	**** **** ****	$345.00
TOTAL CLAIMS	4 - 20 =	0	x18 =$	0.00	or	x 9 = $	0.00
INDEPENDENT	1 - 3 =	0	x78 =$	0.00	or	x 39 = $	0.00
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM PRESENTED no			+260 = $	0.00	or	+130 = $	0.00

TOTAL $ 690.00   TOTAL $ 0.00

_X_   The application transmitted herewith is filed in accordance
      with 37 CFR 1.41(c). The undersigned has been authorized by the
      inventor(s) to file the present application. The original duly
      executed patent application together with the surcharge will be
      forwarded in due course.

_X_   A check in the amount of $__690.00__ to cover the filing fee and
      recording fee (if applicable) is enclosed.

____ The Government Filing Fee will be paid at the time of completion
      of the filing requirement.

____ Please charge Deposit Account No. 02-2448 in the amount of
      $_____. A triplicate copy of this transmittal form is
      enclosed.

_X_   Send Correspondence to: BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
                                P. O. Box 747
                                Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

____ No fee is enclosed.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By_____
TIM R. WYCKOFF
Reg. No. 46, 175
P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000
TRW/dpt

IN THE U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant(s):   BENEKE, Knut

Application No.:   Group:

Filed: September 8, 2000   Examiner:

For: A METHOD FOR ADJUSTING COLOR IN AN IMAGE

L E T T E R

Assistant Commissioner for Patents   September 8, 2000
Box Patent Application   4175-0101P
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

    Under the provisions of 35 USC 119 and 37 CFR 1.55(a), the

applicant hereby claims the right of priority based on the following

application(s):

Country	Application No.	Filed
GERMANY	199 43 183.3	09/09/99

    A certified copy of the above-noted application(s) is(are)

attached hereto.

    If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this,

concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any

overpayment to deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees

required under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. 1.17; particularly,

extension of time fees.

                          Respectfully submitted,

                          BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

                     By:_____
                          TIM R. WYCKOFF
Attachment   Reg. No. 46,175
(703) 205-8000   P. O. Box 747
/dpt   Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

A METHOD FOR ADJUSTING COLOR IN AN IMAGE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This application claims priority based on German application 199 43 183.3, filed September 9, 1999 and the contents thereof are incorporated herein by reference.

5   Field of the Invention:

The present invention relates to methods for adjusting color in an image, more particularly, to adjusting color in an X-ray image.

Background Art:

In the radioscopy of objects, sub-objects are represented by varying brightness levels in

10   accordance with their X-ray absorption (grayscale image). In films, high-absorbing objects/sub-objects are represented as light images, while low-absorbing objects/sub-objects produce significant darkening and are therefore represented as darker images. In electronic image processing, using reverse imaging is also customary, i.e. light grayscale values are used for objects/sub-objects having weak X-ray absorption.

15   The objects/sub-objects may be X-rayed using varied energy levels to provide improved identification of the material(s) that the objects/sub-objects are made from. The type materials of the X-rayed objects or sub-objects may be determined from absorption values determinable at the different energy levels.

For visual determination of the objects'/sub-objects' materials, the materials of the

20   objects/sub-objects may be represented by different colors. For example, a color is assigned to

1

an average atomic number that defines a specific material type. This produces a so-called false-color- image for the human eye, made up of two specific types of information: absorption and material.

Accordingly, if two materials having identical absorption (brightness), but are made from

5   different materials (color), are compared to this false-color-image, the two materials appear to have different brightness levels to the human eye, since the human eye has different sensitivity to different colors. Therefore, a green object is perceived to be much brighter than a blue object. This results in the conclusion that the blue object is subject to a higher absorption than the green one, because the human eye is especially sensitive to green, and on the contrary, is insensitive

10   to blue. This leads to unpleasant visual strain for a person viewing the image and to poor discernability of objects represented by darker colors. The latter is particularly important when analyzing an X-ray image, because here indeed is where superimposed sub-objects in the image must be discernable as shadings lying one behind another.

European patent documents EP 0 523 898 B1, EP 0 584 690 B1, and EP 0 758 514 B

15   disclose devices and processes that improve color images in the television and video sector, taking into account the three primary colors – red, green, and blue – according to the NTSC (National Television System Committee) standard.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to regenerate and optimize a color image viewed by the

20   human eye, specifically an X-ray image, so that the observer is subjected to less visual strain and the discernability of sub-objects is improved.

2

This and other objects of the present invention are achieved by providing a method for

adjusting colors of an image, in particular of an X-ray image, in which an object having sub-

objects shown in different colors is depicted. The steps of the method include determining an

absorption attribute of a plurality of the sub-objects, assigning a specific color to each of the

5   plurality of sub-objects having a same absorption attribute, each specific color being different

from each other, adjusting a brightness level of one of the specific colors by adjusting each pixel

thereof with a determined color proportion of at least one of red, green or blue, whereby the

adjustment of the brightness level takes into consideration the sensitivity of the human eye, and

displaying at least the plurality of sub-objects having the same absorption attributes on a monitor,

10   whereby adjustment of the brightness level of one of the specific colors causes the human eye

to view at least the plurality of sub-objects as having equal brightness levels.

The present invention is based on the idea of adapting the representation of different

colors to the viewing behavior of the human eye, so that the different colors at the same X-ray

absorption are represented with the same degree of brightness to the human eye. The same degree

15   of brightness thus means that after adapting the colors to the spectral sensitivity curve of the eye,

the observer has the impression that the colors are equally bright.

In addition, it is also advantageous that smaller areas having a lower degree of brightness

are also quickly discerned by the viewer, since they are more quickly perceived by the human

eye after the brightness is adjusted.

20   Red, Green and Blue (RGB) values calculated for the adaptation are stored in support

tables of a computer or processor, which is accessed for representation of colors on a display

device or monitor. Therefore, a brightness specification and a present color value are input into

the computer, as a result of which the RGB values previously calculated and stored for the input

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brightness and special color value are taken from the support tables.

Further scope of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter. However, it should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention are

5   given by way of illustration only, since various changes and modifications within the sprit and scope of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from this detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed

10   description given hereinbelow and the accompanying drawings which are given by way of illustration only, and thus are not imitative of the present invention, and wherein:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating various elemental features according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

15   Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating various elemental features according to an embodiment of the present invention. Although elements according to the drawing will be discussed in detail they are not to be construed as limiting of the claimed invention, as it is understood by those skilled in the art that various modifications and/or additions may be made to the illustrated elements and such are embraced by the scope of the hereinafter set

20   forth claims.

Referring to Fig. 1, as illustrated an object 1, containing several sub-objects 2, 3, 4,

is moved through a plurality of X-ray beams FX (may also be just one X-ray beam) via a conveyor (not shown in detail) or the like. The X-ray beams FX are generated by an X-ray beam source 5.

The sub-object 2, for example, is made of an organic material (clothing or the like) having an average thickness. The sub-object 3, for example, is made of iron having a thickness of 3 mm. The sub-object 4 is (pure) aluminum having a thickness of 20 mm. The sub-objects 2, 3 and 4 absorb the X-ray beams FX in different ways, whereby the sub-objects 3 and 4 generate identical absorption values despite their differing thickness in the example.

The absorption of the X-ray beams FX is measured via detectors 6 and input into a computer or processor 7 for evaluation and processing. In the computer 7, the absorption values are converted for grayscale imaging in a known manner. With the aid of the grayscale image, the absorption behavior, particularly of the sub-objects 2, 3, and 4, is depicted on a monitor 8. In this grayscale image on the monitor 8, brightness levels that differ among the sub-objects 2 and 3, or 2 and 4, and that are identical between sub-objects 3 and 4, are discerned by the human eye of a viewer (not shown in further detail).

In order to provide a visual representation of the materials of the sub-objects 2, 3 and 4 themselves, a signal for absorption in the high-energy range of the X-ray spectrum and a separate signal for absorption in the low-energy range are measured from the detectors 6 in a known manner using the two-energy process (not shown in further detail here for the sake of clarity). From these two signals, the average atomic number of the sub-objects 2, 3 and 4 is determined in the computer 7. Using the average atomic number of each sub-object 2, 3 and 4 a display color is assigned to each of the sub-objects. For example, the color orange is assigned to organic materials having a low average atomic number, the color green is

assigned to aluminum that has a higher average atomic number, and the color blue is assigned

to iron and steel, which have even higher average atomic numbers. These shades are depicted

dark or bright depending on material thickness or material density. This means that the

density or the thickness of the sub-objects 2, 3 and 4 determine the apparent brightness of the

5   respective color or respective shade thereof.

The sub-object 2 is thus depicted in a color image (false-color-image), for example,

as bright orange. In a color image of this type, the sub-object 3 would then be depicted as a

dark blue and the sub-object 4 would be depicted as a strong green (if the sub-object 4 were

thinner, it would be depicted as a light green).

10   Accordingly, especially in the representation of the materials of the sub-object 3 and

the sub-object 4, different perceived color intensities with regard to the brightness of the color

or the shade appear. While the sub-object 3 and the sub-object 4 appeared equally bright in

known grayscale imaging because the two have the same absorption, the impression is now

different in the color image because the sub-object 3 is depicted in the color blue and the sub-

15   object 4 is depicted in green, whereby the color green is perceived to be much brighter by the

human eye than the color blue.

To avoid this, a color adjustment for the human eye of the entire color image and of

parts of the color image is now performed based on the three-color theory.

For the sake of clarity, the sub-object 2 is not taken into consideration in the

20   following description.

In the color image representation, the sub-objects 3 and 4, which appear equally

bright due to their having identical absorption properties, are preferably adjusted to the same

or approximately the same brightness. This is done in accordance with the known formula

6

(according to Grassmann):

$$Y = 0.299 * R + 0.587 * G + 0.114 * B$$

where Y is the brightness, R is the primary color red, G is the primary color green, and B is the primary color blue, which are thus the RGB values of a color pixel. The quantities R, G, B and

5   Y may range in value from 0.000 to 1.000.

To obtain an approximately equal brightness Y for all color pixels, in particular, those with the same absorption values, the color proportion R, G, B for each pixel is calculated, which must be adjusted or added for increasing the intensity, as is described hereinbelow.

The two sub-objects 3 and 4 have an identical absorption of 60%, for example, but each

10   have a different thickness. A brightness of Y = 0.4 results in a known manner from the absorption of 60%.

Due to the average atomic number, the sub-object 4 is depicted in a green shade. Assuming the material is pure aluminum, this yields the following RGB-values: 0.000/0.681/0.000, since no red and no blue are present in the pure green shade (0.587* 0.681

15   = 0.4).

The sub-object 3 is represented in blue due to its average atomic number. Following the discussion hereinabove, the RGB values are: 0.000/0.000/3.509, thereby resulting in a blue shade (0.114*3.509 = 0.4).

Therefore, according to the above calculations, the brightness Y_G for green is

20   approximately equal to the brightness Y_B for blue, i.e. $Y_G = 0.4 = Y_B$.

RGB values over 1.000 are not possible.

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Therefore, with the addition of red and/or green and taking the color theory into consideration, the brightness of the sub-object 3 is adjusted in a manner visually perceptible to the eye, in this case a brightening of the shade of blue, since blue is darker than green. This brightening is done preferably so that red and green values share in equal proportion in the RGB

5 value of the blue color.

Accordingly the necessary RGB value is calculated as follows:

$$Y = 0.4 = 0.299*0.323 + 0.587*0.323 + 0.114*1.000, \text{ i.e.}$$

$$RGB = 0.323/0.323/1.000.$$

With this process, to the human eye, the sub-object 3 is depicted as a blue equal in

10 brightness to the green of the sub-object 4. This process can also be applied in an analogous manner to secondary colors.

The intensity of the green color can also be reduced, if this helps provide uniform observation for the viewer. In this process, it is not the brightness of the green color that is decisive, but rather the brightness of another reference color.

15 In practice, tables for brightness adjustment are stored in the computer 7. For a brightness adjustment to be performed for each color, these tables contain the corresponding color values or RGB values to be re-regulated, which are pre-calculated as described and then accessed during the color image display on the monitor 8. Accordingly, the brightness specification and the present color value are input into the tables of the computer 7. The color control of the monitor

20 8 is then handled via three outputs for color image representation, now consisting of the newly calculated RGB values.

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It is understood that this process is not limited to representation of X-ray images. Thus, brightness adjustment for the human eye can also be used in the video and television sector.

The invention being thus described, it will be obvious that the same may be varied in many ways. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of

5   the invention, and all such modifications as would be obvious to one skilled in the art are intended to be included within the scope of the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1. A method for adjusting colors of an image, in particular of an X-ray image in which

2   an object (1) having sub-objects (2, 3, 4) shown in different colors is depicted, comprising the

3   steps of:

4   determining an absorption attribute of a plurality of the sub-objects (3, 4);

5   assigning a specific color to each of the plurality of sub-objects (3, 4) having a same

6   absorption attribute, each specific color being different from each other;

7   adjusting a brightness level of one of the specific colors by adjusting each pixel thereof

8   with a determined color proportion of at least one of red, green or blue (R, G, B), whereby the

9   adjustment of the brightness level takes into consideration the sensitivity of the human eye; and

10   displaying at least the plurality of sub-objects (3, 4) having the same absorption attributes

11   on a monitor (8), whereby adjustment of the brightness level of one of the specific colors causes

12   the human eye to view at least the plurality of sub-objects (3,4) as having equal brightness levels.

1   2. The method according to claim 1, wherein color proportions (R, G, B) are stored in

2   support tables of a computer (7).

1   3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the intensity of the specific colors is

2   increased or decreased for the brightness adjustment.

10

1   4. The method according to claim 1, wherein prior to the adjusting step, the method

2   further comprises:

3   determining one average atomic number of each of the at least the plurality of sub-objects

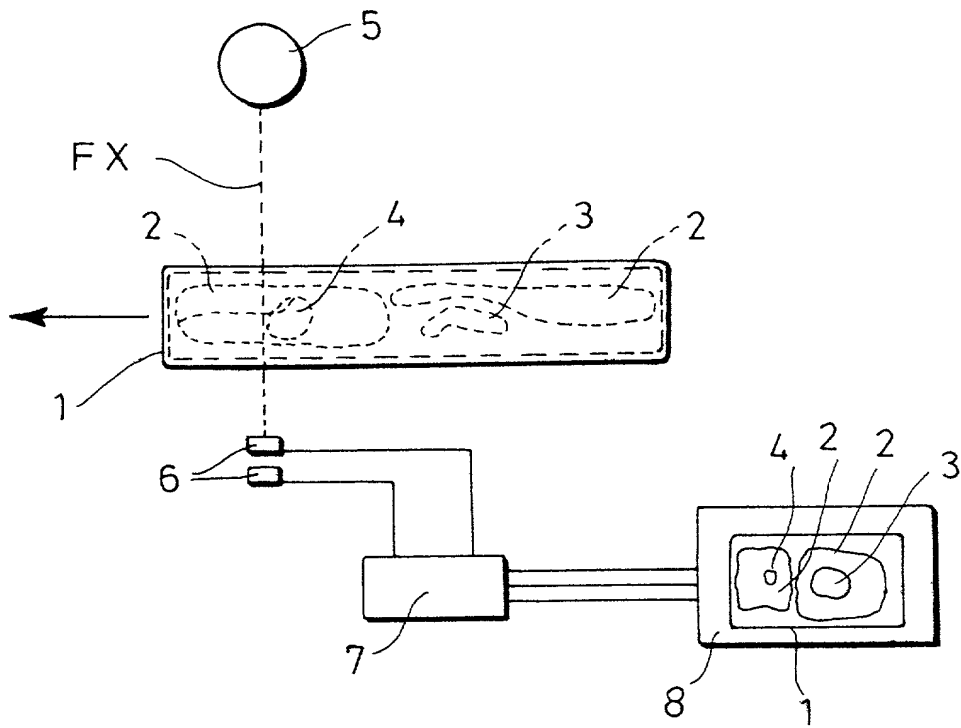4   (3, 4) from two different energies; and

5   assigning the specific colors to the at least plurality of sub-objects based upon their

6   respective average atomic number.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In the representation of X-ray images, an atomic number characteristic for an X-rayed sub-object (2, 3, 4) is determined from X-ray beams having different energies and the absorption values determined in that process, to which specific colors and shades are assigned. The representation of the color intensity is influenced so that, when representing objects (3, 4) having the same X-ray absorption on a monitor (8), the colors appear equally bright to the viewer. To that end, while the pre-set color for the objects (3, 4) is maintained, the brightness of the different colors is adjusted to an equal or approximately equal brightness, taking into account the spectral sensitivity of the human eye.